

MECKLENBURG COUNTY

EQUITY ACTION PLAN

FISCAL YEAR 2020 ANNUAL REPORT





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EQUITY VISION STATEMENT: *all people* in Mecklenburg County will have an equitable opportunity to *thrive* in the workplace and in the community. (Adopted April 1, 2019)

EQUITY MISSION: To build and sustain a culture of equity and inclusion across the County through understanding, analyzing and eliminating the root causes of racial disparities and advancing equitable policies, practices and procedures, creating a culture of equity to meet the needs of all residents.

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OFFICE OF EQUITY AND INCLUSION

OUR STORY

On September 20, 2016, a deadly officer involved shooting sparked days of civil unrest within the Charlotte community. As a result of the shooting and the Upward Mobility Taskforce's recommendations for the community to make funding, program and policy decisions through the lens of equity, County Manager established **Equity as a top priority** area for the County. Equity and Inclusion Manager, Phin Xaypangna was appointed in July of 2017 to intentionally advance diversity, equity and inclusion, with an emphasis on racial equity and intersectionality by focusing on operations, policies and procedures to ensure equal access to services by every resident who needs them. **Mecklenburg County must put equity at the center of our operations, policies and partnerships by having a long-term commitment to address institutional and systemic issues inherited in policies, practices and procedures that disproportionately impact/burden People of Color in Mecklenburg County.**

CIVIL UNREST IN 2016

In September 2017, the office formalized a partnership with the **Government Alliance on Race and Equity**. The Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) is a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. Our current work plan is centered around the Government Alliance on Race and Equity's framework of **normalizing, organizing and operationalizing equity**.





Formalization of the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI)

In FY19, the Office of Equity and Inclusion was formally established to sustain the work. In FY20, the Office of Equity and Inclusion added one additional staff member to serve as an enterprise equity and inclusion consultant. OEI reports to the Assistant County Manager/Chief of Staff.

Roles & Responsibilities of OEI:

- Advancing racial equity in all aspects of County operations
- Charged with the development and oversight of enterprise-wide and department level Equity Action Plans in Mecklenburg County
- Provide guidance, education and technical assistance to all departments/agencies as they develop sustainable methods to build capacity and long-term sustainability
- Work to resolve issues rooted in bias and discrimination through research, education and partnerships
- Build community partners/alliances to promote equity and inclusion within Mecklenburg County and throughout the region to achieve equitable outcomes for all

The first phase was an assessment that included focus groups and an employee survey, while the second phase consists of workshops for mid to senior managers, the development of an Equity Core Team that will provide implementation support in and across departments and conducting “Train the Trainer” to rollout the training to all employees.

THE EQUITY CORE TEAM

was established to support and carry out the strategic direction for the Equity Initiative to:

- 1) Create leadership body across all departments to help guide this work
- 2) Develop internal capacity to ensure its sustainability
- 3) Develop a short and long-term plan of implementation for long term success

[Click here to see the current list of Equity Core Team](#)



WE LEAD WITH RACE

We know change is possible with intentionality and focus. Despite progress in addressing explicit discrimination, racial inequities still continue to be deep, pervasive and persistent across our community and the country. Our goal must go

beyond closing the gaps. We must improve overall outcome by focusing efforts on those who are faring the worst. To advance equity, the approach must include not only programs, but also policy changes, and culture transformations within institutions.

To advance equity, governments must integrate equity as a norm. Governments are able to implement policy changes at multiple levels, across multiple sectors to drive larger systemic change. Policies alone, however, are insufficient. Employees within the institution must normalize racial equity as a key value and have clear understanding and shared definitions. They must operationalize equity via new policies and by transforming the underlying culture of government. And finally, they must organize, both internally and externally through partnerships with other institutions and the community.



DEFINING KEY TERMS:

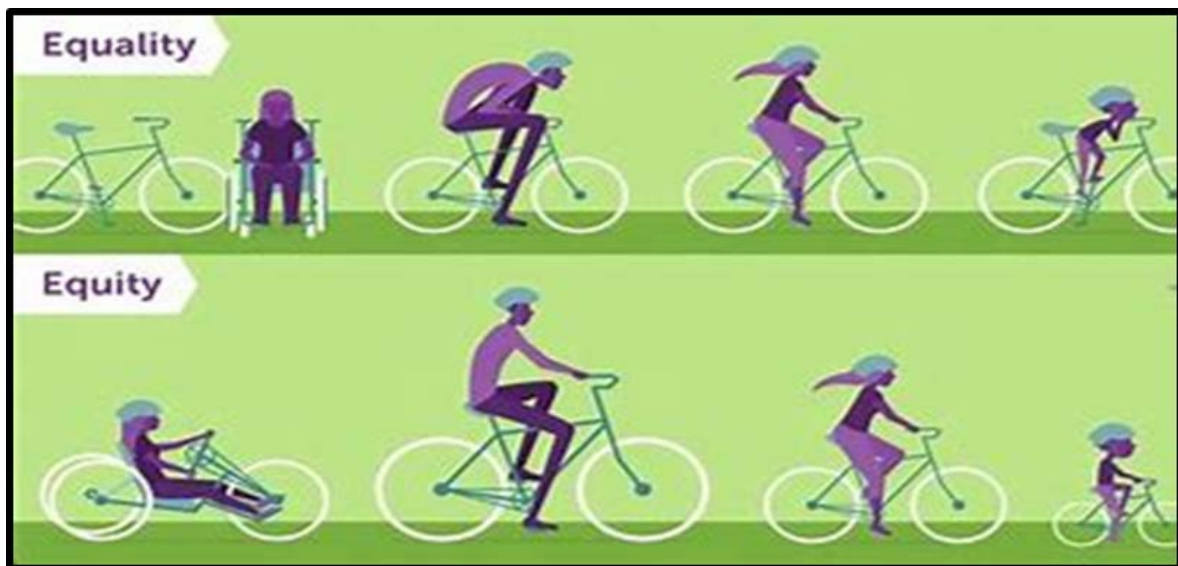
Using shared definitions of key terms is important for equity work because it provides clarity and consistency across all our workplaces, which leads to a better analysis of how institutional racism functions, how it is maintained, and how it perpetuates injustices. With a shared understanding across departments, we can collectively be more effective in deconstructing the mechanisms that support systemic oppression and begin constructing ones that produce more equitable outcomes.

Racial Equity Means:

Closing the gaps so that **race does not predict one's success**, while also **improving outcomes for all**

To do so, have to:

- **Target strategies** to focus improvements for those worse off
- Move beyond services and focus on changing **policies, institutions and structures;**
- Shifting focus from individuals' biases to **systemic inequity** by confronting institutional/system issues in the organization.



Infographic adopted from Robert Wood Foundation

EQUALITY = SAMENESS
GIVING EVERYONE THE SAME THING

It only works if everyone starts from the same place

EQUITY = FAIRNESS
ACCESS TO SAME OPPORTUNITIES

We must first ensure equity before we can enjoy equality



Individual racism:

Bigotry or discrimination by an individual based on race.

Institutional racism:

Policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

Structural racism:

A history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.



OVERVIEW OF EQUITY ACTION PLANNING PROCESS

Racial Equity Action Plans can put a theory of change into action to achieve a collective vision of racial equity. Plans can drive institutional and structural change. However, the goal we seek is not a plan. The goal is institutional and structural change, which requires resources to implement: time, money, skills, and effort. It requires local governments will and expertise to change our policies, the way we do business, our habits, and cultures.

Mecklenburg County engaged in the process to develop their plan by applying a racial equity tool to its policies, practices and procedures. The end result was a plan that captures the breadth of racial equity work happening across the organization, identifies key metrics to track progress, and articulates a vision of a community with thriving residents once racial equity has been achieved for all.

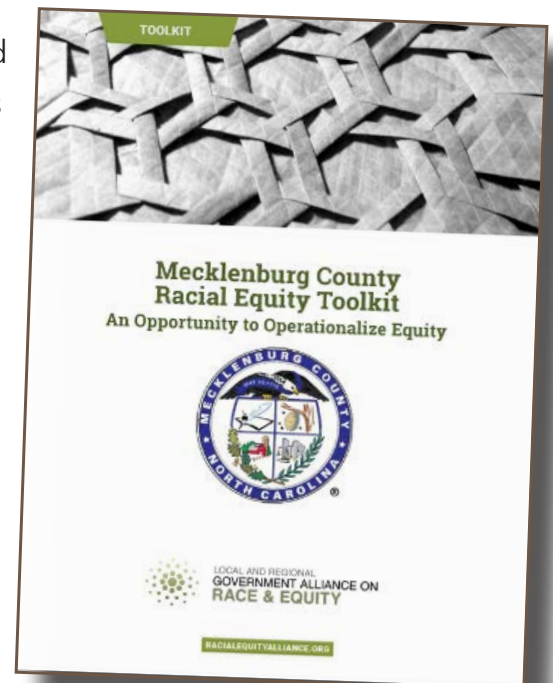
The approach Mecklenburg County took was led by the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) at Race Forward and weaved the Racial Equity Tool into the development of Mecklenburg County's Equity Action Plan. The racial equity tool steps connect closely with the steps for development of a racial equity action plan. The steps of the Racial Equity Tool include:



The debut of the draft version of the Racial Equity Action Plan came through the Equity Core Team's Symposium in late April of 2019. The symposium featured the nine months of work completed by Equity Core Team members; a panel discussion regarding how Mecklenburg County might customize and utilize a Racial Equity Tool; and recommendations for next steps from GARE staff. Finalization of the plan came following approval from the County Manager and the Manager's Cabinet in June 2019.

Racial Equity Tool

Once the plan was adopted, Mecklenburg County customized the Racial Equity Tool for its usage. The Racial Equity Tool was designed to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions, including policies, practices, programs, and budgets. A Racial Equity Tool is both a product and a process. Use of a Racial Equity Tool can help develop strategies and actions that reduce racial inequities and improve success for all groups. Too often, policies and programs are developed and implemented without thoughtful consideration of racial equity. When racial equity is not explicitly brought into operations and decision-making, racial inequities are likely to be perpetuated. Racial Equity Tools provide a structure for institutionalizing the consideration of racial equity by recognizing who may benefit or who may be burdened by the decision at hand. County leadership will be trained to use this tool to make decision.



MECKLENBURG COUNTY EQUITY ACTION PLAN FY20 -22



GOAL 1: Infrastructure & Tools

Mecklenburg County employees and residents have the understanding of and ability to advance equity.

STRATEGY A: Implement infrastructure for Mecklenburg County employees to understand and commit to advance racial equity within the County government.

STRATEGY B: Develop skills for Mecklenburg County employees to understand and commit to advance racial equity within the County government.

STRATEGY C: Build community partnerships and residents' understanding of racial equity.

GOAL 2: Workforce Equity

Mecklenburg County is a model employer advancing racial equity.

STRATEGY A: Evaluate the recruitment and hiring process using racial equity lens.

STRATEGY B: Review and refine Human Resources policies and procedures related to recruitment and hiring using racial equity tools.

STRATEGY C: Increase employee awareness and development opportunities across all salary plans.

GOAL 3: Inclusive Engagement

Mecklenburg County residents are engaged in the community where they live, learn, work and recreate.

STRATEGY A: Ensure Board of County Commissioners engagement opportunities are accessible to all residents.

STRATEGY B: Develop the Countywide Inclusive Outreach and Community Engagement Framework.

[Click here to view the approved Equity Action Plan.](#)

MECKLENBURG COUNTY EQUITY ACTION PLAN FY20 -22



GOAL 4: Health Equity:

All residents in Mecklenburg County are healthy.

STRATEGY A: All Residents receive effective, accessible and satisfactory health services at current and future Community Resource Center.

STRATEGY B: Increase capacity of CRC staff to address services through an equity lens.

Goal 5: Economic Opportunity

Mecklenburg County's small businesses and non-profits share in the County's economic prosperity.

STRATEGY A: Increase Minority/Women-Owned/ Small Business Enterprise and Nonprofit businesses participation with Mecklenburg County Government.

STRATEGY B: Increase access to capital for small businesses owned by people of color.

Goal 6: Criminal Justice

All residents in Mecklenburg County live in a more just and equitable community.

STRATEGY A: Reduce racial disparities and disproportionality within the Criminal Justice System.

[Click here to view the approved Equity Action Plan.](#)



GOAL 1: Infrastructure & Tools

Mecklenburg County employees and residents have the understanding of and ability to advance equity

RESULTS:

Advancing Racial Equity Training

Mecklenburg County began implementing the GARE national best practice model that brings systemic analysis and an innovative approach to complex race issues to help people take effective action toward racial equity. One of the first steps in taking that effective action is to normalize conversations around race so that employees within the County have the knowledge, the skills, the comfort and competence to recognize racial inequities. GARE provided its *Role of Government Training to Mecklenburg County*, a training that the OEI in collaboration with GARE added jurisdictional specific content so that the information taught spoke to historical and ongoing challenges, both nationally and within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. Once these additions were made, the Role of Government Training, internally regarded as the Advancing Racial Equity Training, began within our organization. The one-day training was first facilitated to the County's leadership and management team in 2017, and in the fall of 2019, it was launched as a required County-Wide curriculum.

Each training is co-facilitated by a Mecklenburg County employee who partners with the OEI and an External Consultant with an expertise in Critical Race Theory. Since launching the Advancing Racial Equity Training county-wide in 2019, **more than 2,500 employees have completed** the training. Following the training and evaluations, 90% of employees indicated that they gained an understanding of the role of government in advancing racial equity and that they developed a better understanding of racial terminology, such as implicit bias, institutional and structural racism. It is Mecklenburg County's intention to have approximately 100% of its staff trained on this curriculum no later than December 2021 despite the COVID-19 Pandemic.



"The course definitely exceeded my expectations...we sat, we stood, we moved around the room, nobody was put on the spot, it was just really well done. Seeing all the video clips and hearing about all the different ways that banks and local and national governments colluded to exclude a whole group of people; I knew little bits of it, and they teach little bits of it in history. It's very well done so it's not an embarrassing or shaming thing, it's a trying to understand thing."

2020 Racial Equity Learning Webinar Series

In the summer of 2020, the County Manager's Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI) created and implemented a Racial Equity Learning Webinar Series. The COVID-19 pandemic and the notable racial injustices that took place in 2020 resulting in civil unrest put a direct spotlight on existing disparities and has since then exacerbated existing racial injustice and social disparities in systems within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community. This learning series was designed for employees to increase their skills and knowledge in advancing racial equity. The Racial Equity Learning Webinar Series consisted of 9 separate sessions with a new topic being featured on a bi-weekly basis from June 2020 – September 2020. The passion of County employees regarding diversity, equity and inclusion was noted in our attendance/registration records as employees quickly filled each session with a total of 1500 attendees. Additionally, the webinar series garnered appreciations from County employees with participants sharing comments such as "Great presentation! I can't wait to share this with my co-workers", "Thank you very much!! Learned, Loved & enjoyed all of the information!" and "Thank you for making an open and safe space to share our experiences". Each learning webinar featured a different topic for discussion and the following are the titles of each session.

- **COVID 19 and Shelter In Place: Privilege, Protest and Structural Racism in Black and White**
- **Race, LGBTQ+ and Equity**
- **Concepts of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Social Justice**
- **The Impact of Implicit Bias in Achieving Racial Equity**
- **State of Affairs of the Hispanic Community in Mecklenburg County**
- **Overview: Using A Racial Equity Tool (RET) for Decision Making**
- **How Charlotte Got Segregated**
- **Growing up White**
- **Advancement of Racial Equity In Mecklenburg County Departments**

Using Racial Equity lens in COVID19 Response

In collaboration with GARE and the Equity Core Team, OEI developed Covid19 Response Guide in Using Racial Equity Lens. To facilitate consideration of racial equity, this tool was created to assist leadership in decision making process to examine how communities will be affected, both short-term and long-term, by a proposed action or decision of the Mecklenburg County during the COVID-19 pandemic. In partnership with the City of Charlotte, Community Building Initiative and Norsan Media, OEI hosted two Town Halls on Impacts on Community of Color. In collaboration with the City of Charlotte, assisted with the translations/videos in multiple languages.

Formation of the Department Equity Action Teams (DEATs)

OEI in partnership with department directors formed the Departmental Equity Action Teams in every department for accountability and sustainability. The DEATs comprised of approximately 165 employees at all levels ranging between 5 to 15 people in each department. The teams launched its first meeting and only meeting in February 2020 to begin in the development of the equity action plans. Due to COVID19, additional planning meetings have been postponed. The deadline for the completion will be shifted to FY21. At the end of the equity action planning process, DEAT members will present the draft of the action plans for adoption by its leadership.

Partners For Racial Equity

In 2020, the killing of George Floyd led to international protests with community members calling for justice and an end to institutional and systemic racism. Charlotte-Mecklenburg was included in these demonstrations. As the voices of community members continue to be heard, leaders within Mecklenburg County Government and the City of Charlotte became even more committed to fostering a racially equitable community for everyone to live and prosper; along with being more intentional around integrating community member voices into the conversation per the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Model so that our strategies achieve the agreed upon desired result. It was recognized that the way in which the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community may be able to benefit the most with respect to this systemic undertaking is if our two government institutions work together in collaboration with the community.

As a result, Mecklenburg County in partnership with The City of Charlotte and two nonprofit organizations, Community Building Initiative (CBI) and Race Matters for Juvenile Justice (RMJJ), created a Joint Statement condemning and acknowledging systemic racism while also noting that our four institutions will work in association with each other to provide opportunities for community engagement.

Since that statement was released on June 4, 2020, the Partners for Racial Equity developed its first community engagement workshop model that consists of two key elements - Community Dialogue and Government's Role in Creating Equitable Outcomes. By our having our initial planning conversations with community in this fashion it creates a path for being able to adjust our systems with community representation present in a manner that is consistent with national best practice in the hope that when these racially equitable desired results are achieved, that it is effective, efficient and well received by the community at-large.

Facilitated Dialogue on Race

As a follow up to the international protests with community members calling for justice and an end to institutional and systemic racism, OEl facilitated conversations on racial inequities/systemic racism for 20 intact workgroups in departments ranging from 10-20 per group. These facilitated dialogues gave employees opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings and perspectives to be able to start normalizing the conversations around race and racial inequities.

Community Indicators/Performance Measures:



100% DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS

have an EI Initiative on their FY20 Workplan



2500 EMPLOYEES

completed the Advancing
Racial Equity Training



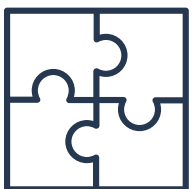
1500 EMPLOYEES

participated in the
Learning Webinar Series

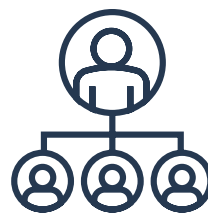


COMMUNITY TOWNHALLS

held on COVID-19 Impacts on Communities of Color with approximately 178 attendees



24 DEPARTMENTS
formed DEATs

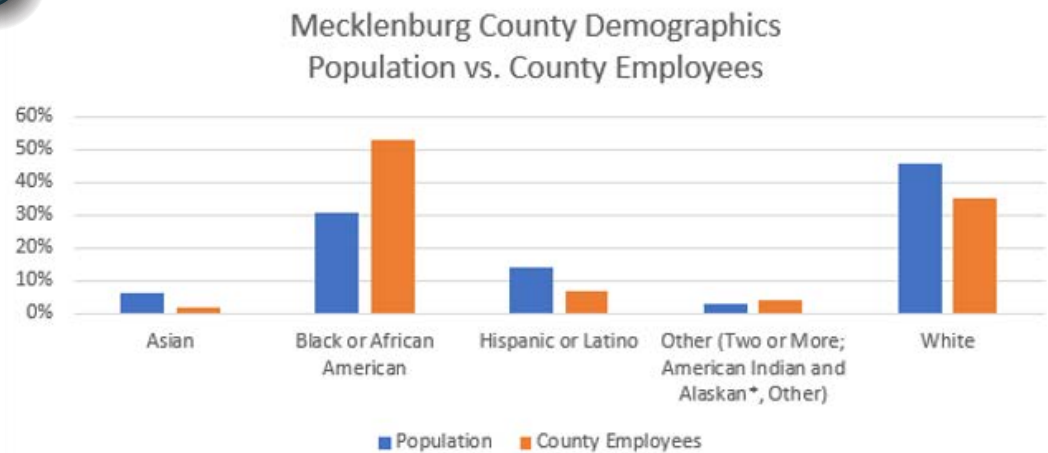


20 WORKGROUPS
participated in Racial
Facilitated Dialogues



GOAL 2: Workforce Equity

Mecklenburg County is a model employer in advancing racial equity.



Source: Mecklenburg County HR (MC Employees as of 6/30/20) and Census Bureau; 2010-2018 ACS 1-year estimates (Totals as of 2018).

RESULTS:

Leadership Programs Enhancements

In an effort to advance racial equity and ensure our leaders are adequately prepared, enhancements were made to the leadership programs. These curricula will improve opportunities for employees to develop and grow and support their ability to advance into or within leadership roles. The former “Supervising for Success” program, rebranded as “MeckLead” has been updated and specifically targets frontline supervisors and managers. The goal of the program is to ensure leader readiness and effectiveness, including their understanding and equitable application of processes with their employees. Both programs will be launched in Spring, 2021, and will be offered in the virtual learning environment to increase accessibility to a greater number of employees.

Promote Usage of Online Learning Platforms

Learning and Organization Effectiveness will communicate to the overall organization all new programming and learning opportunities on the horizon. Employees will receive announcement of these virtual platforms such as Cornerstone, Lynda.Com & DDI self-paced learning. Further, we will facilitate new shorter length instructor-led courses virtually. This will give frontline employees greater options regarding scheduling around their work and minimizing time away. New course offerings for frontline employees include: “Embracing Change”, “Communicating with Impact”, “Navigating Beyond Conflict”, “Creating an Inclusive Environment” and “High Impact Feedback and Listening”.

Community Indicators/ Performance Measures:

Increase in People of Color in Salary Plan D and E :

	D	E
Totals by Pay Band D & E - FY19	40.4%	39.7%
Totals by Pay Band D & E - FY20	41.9%	41.2%
Change (Increase)	1.5%	1.5%

GOAL 3: Inclusive Engagement

Mecklenburg County residents are engaged in the community where they live, learn, work and recreate.



RESULTS:

BOCC Meetings Community Participation

Mecklenburg County strives to ensure all residents can engage in the community where they live, learn, work and recreate. One avenue for resident engagement is participation in the Board of County Commissioner (BOCC) meetings. While the COVID-19 pandemic changed the way BOCC meetings are held, many steps were taken to ensure anyone can access the board meetings. The meetings can be viewed on the Government Channel, watch.mecknc.gov, Twitter, YouTube, and residents can even call in on WebEx to listen. Since moving to remote meetings, sign language interpreters have been providing services at every meeting. In addition, the County has included a live Spanish translation for regular Board of County Commissioner Meetings.

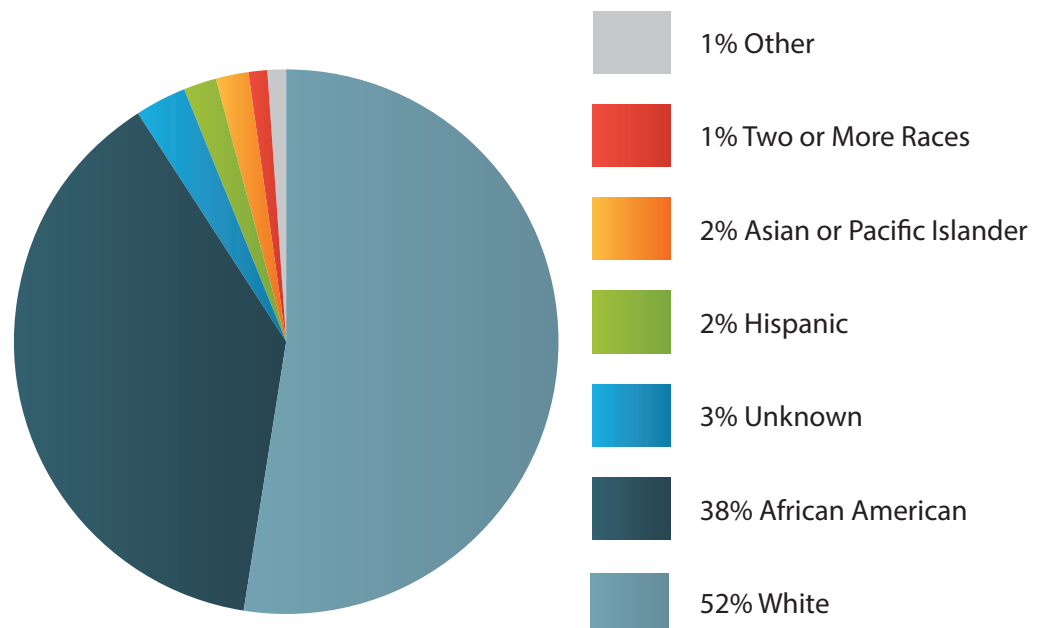
Representation on BOCC's Advisory Boards & Commissions

Another avenue for resident engagement in County government is participation on advisory boards and commissions. The dozens of boards and commissions provide residents an opportunity to aid in the County's decision-making process. As part of the Clerk's Office commitment to ensuring representation, an initial review of board demographics was conducted to better understand where diversity can be improved. The Clerk's Office also purchased new advisory board software that will allow for more robust data collection and reporting to better understand gaps moving forward.

Community Indicators/ Performance Measures:

Demographics of County Advisory Boards reflect community demographics (Baseline Established in 2020):

Note: Less than 1% responded Native American





GOAL 4: Health Equity

All residents in Mecklenburg County are healthy

RESULTS:

One of the initial Health Equity strategies was to increase capacity of CRC staff to address services through an equity lens. As of August 2019, Mecklenburg County Community Resource Center has implemented the action item of employee participation in the Implicit Bias Training hosted by Race Matters for Juvenile Justice (RMJJ) with 100% participation rate. The training covers what is implicit bias,

discuss the science of automatic, unconscious thinking, and provide participants with tools to identify and reduce biases. The Mecklenburg County Community Resource Center department will continue to work with RMJJ to provide Implicit Bias training for all future staff.

Community Indicators/Performance Measures:

- 100% participation rate in the Implicit Bias Training

GOAL 5: Economic Opportunity

Mecklenburg County's small businesses and non-profits share in the County's economic prosperity.

RESULTS:

In October, Griffin & Strong completed an exhaustive, yearlong study of minority and Women owned firms ("MWBE") participation in the County's procurement process and ability to obtain County contracts. This study included reviewing County processes, policies, and historical data; conducting market analyses; determining the availability of qualified firms and their utilization rates; and collecting and analyzing anecdotal information. Griffin & Strong found statistically significant underutilization of MWBEs in all contract categories. Based on these findings, Griffin & Strong made the following recommendations:



- 1. Allocation of Resources, Including Staffing:** The County should increase the size and funding of Contract Compliance staff, including a Chief Diversity Officer, Contract Compliance Officer, and Contract Administration.
- 2. MWBE Subcontracting Goals:** The County should set separate MBE and WBE goals and no longer set SBE goals.
- 3. Robust Good Faith Efforts:** The County should require firms that do not meet the MWBE goals to demonstrate they are soliciting and negotiating with MWBEs in “good faith” for potential subcontracting opportunities.
- 4. Small Business Reserve Program:** The County should designate certain contracts, particularly in Construction, that can only be bid on by small businesses.
- 5. Increased Vendor Rotation**
- 6. Mandatory Subcontracting:** The County should require firms with awards over a determined threshold to subcontract a percentage of their work to subcontractors.
- 7. Strengthen Forecasting:** The County should implement measures to strengthen the current Project at a Glance communication tool and assess additional advertising methods.
- 8. Supportive Services:** The County should provide appropriate resources to accomplish goals outlined in the disparity study.
- 9. Prompt Pay Ordinance:** The County should install measures to track subcontractor payments from general contractors to ensure they receive payments in a timely manner.
- 10. Encourage Joint Ventures:** The County should encourage partnerships that allow MWSBE firms an opportunity to grow.
- 11. Data Maintenance Reform:** The County should implement a tracking system that allows improved tracking of MWSBE firm utilization.

The County has already begun implementation of several of the recommendations, including increasing the compliance staff, continue Projects at a Glance communication, and has a team working on implementing the remaining recommendations as quickly as possible.

The Disparity Study Report and Executive Summary may be found on the [Minority, Women and Small Business Enterprises \(MWSBE\) Program](#) web page.

Community Indicators/Performance Measures:

- 3 community engagement events held with nonprofit organizations
- 66 community engagements held with MWSBE business to inform about County programs and services



GOAL 6: Criminal Justice

All residents in Mecklenburg County live in a more just and equitable community.

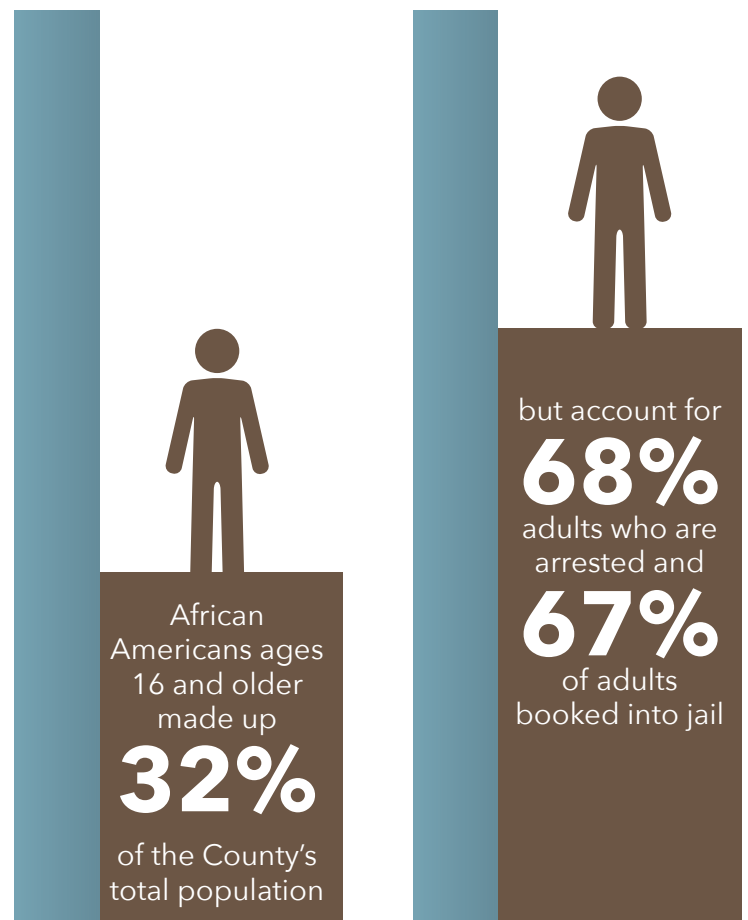
RESULTS:

Develop & launch an online Implicit Bias Training

Criminal Justice Services (CJS) partnered with the W. Haywood Burns Institute to analyze the county's local criminal justice data to understand existing disproportionality and disparities at the

decision points of arrest, filing charges, and booking into jail. The results of the data analysis were made publicly available on CJS's website in June 2020 and serve as the foundation of the county's work in addressing racial and ethnic disparities within the criminal justice system. According to these data, in 2017 African Americans ages 16 and older made up **32% of the County's total population**, but account for **68% of adults who are arrested and 67% of adults booked into jail**. Comparatively, whites made up 51% of the total county population but represented only 23% of arrests and 25% of jail bookings. African Americans ages 16 and older are also more likely to have charges filed than whites. For every 1,000 White adults in the county 82.1 had charges filed, while for every 1,000 African American adults in the county 306.7 had charges filed.

CJS, in conjunction with the Criminal Justice Advisory Group and with funding from the MacArthur Foundation's Safety & Justice Challenge, developed and made available an Implicit Bias Training to all major criminal justice agencies in Mecklenburg County. The purpose of this online training is to give criminal justice professionals, including magistrates, prosecutors, and law-enforcement, tools to help identify and reduce the impact of implicit bias in their work and reduce racial and ethnic disparities within the larger criminal justice system. CJS's Equity and Inclusion Specialists will be providing optional follow-up sessions to employees to have more in-depth discussions around implicit bias and systemic racism. The goal is to have all employees from participating agencies complete the online training.





**For more information,
visit the Office of Equity and Inclusion:**

mecktech.sharepoint.com/sites/DEI

www.mecknc.gov/CountyManagersOffice/Equity-and-Inclusion/Pages/Home.aspx

